DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 334 864 FL 019 321

AUTHOR Pearson, Bethyl A.; Xu, Qiang
TITLE Ways To Achieve "Working Consensus": Some Cross-Cultural Considerations.
PUB DATE Mar 91
NOTE 28p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (25th, New York, NY, March 24-28, 1991).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Comparative Analysis; *English (Second Language); *Group Dynamics; Higher Education; *Intercultural Communication; *Language Variation; Mandarin Chinese; Native Speakers; North American English; *Standard Spoken Usage

ABSTRACT

A study investigated cultural variations in the ways groups of speakers reach consensus in the face of disagreement or suggestion. Subjects were six graduate students in each of five groups: one composed of native speakers of American English, two of Taiwanese Chinese, and two of mainland Chinese. Each group performed a desert survival exercise, arriving at agreement on a ranking of items needed for survival. One Taiwanese Chinese and one mainland Chinese group were given instructions in Mandarin; others were instructed in English. Disagreements and suggestions in the interactions were counted, and the interactions' conduct and outcomes were qualitatively evaluated in terms of efficiency and organization. Similarities and differences were found in all five groups in the ways in which they began the interaction and reached consensus and in the resulting rankings as compared with that of a survival expert. Some cultural dependencies were found in the organization and patterns of realization in disagreement and suggestion. It is concluded that students of English as a Second Language should be exposed to a variety of forms used to disagree and suggest, and to how these forms are used in discourse and ratification achieved. The task description is appended. Contains 15 references. (MSE)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED334864

Ways to achieve "working consensus": Some cross-cultural considerations

Bethyl A. Pearson

Qiang Xu

Arizona State University

TESOL '91

New York, New York

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Person, Xu.

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

FL019321

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Ways to achieve "working consensus": Some cross-cultural considerations[1]

This paper conducts a three-way comparison of an aspect of sociolinguistic behavior of native speakers of American English, Chinese speakers of English as an L2 (second language), and Chinese speakers in their own L1 (first language) as they each perform a uniform task. It illustrates that while many speech act realizations are similar across the groups, certain variations occur which correlate with cultural factors.

Many investigations have compared learners' L2 English to native English speaker norms, including, for example, analyses of the use and encoding of face-threatening acts (FTA's) such as apologies and requests (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984), disagreements (Garcia, 1989), expressions of gratitude (Eisenstein & Bodman, 1986), and chastisement (Beebe & Takahashi, 1989).

However, while some linguistic groups speaking English as their L2 have been investigated frequently (e.g. Japanese (Beebe & Takahashi, 1989), others are being studied for the first time (e.g. Venezuelans (Garcia, 1989)), and no specific comparative analysis of the FTA's of native speakers of Chinese in L2 English has been conducted (but see Nash, 1983 for L1 Chinese). Second, many of the data of previous work are drawn from discourse-completion tasks or dyadic role-plays to the exclusion of group interactions and longer stretches of authentic discourse. Third, relatively few

studies have analyzed parallel acts in the non-English L1s, so that often sources of variability such as "transfer" have been impossible to investigate. Fourth, speech act theory itself, which underlies the bulk of this research, has been seriously challenged for its lack of emphasis on the relation of the act to the interactive discourse in which it is situated (Flowerdew, 1990).

This paper aims to extend this earlier work by investigating the ways in which a group of speakers reach "working consensus" (Goffman, 1959). Specifically, it will examine the linguistic encoding of two FTA's, 'disagreeing' and 'suggesting', which critically embed themselves in and constitute the cooperative discourse and display relative mitigation or directness as well (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

May we state at the outset that while we have ultimate interest in generalizing to differences in cultural influence, we look at this study as only the first step in that direction. That is, we recognize the specificity of the data with which we are working, and we merely hope that our findings will go some way in raising questions for future investigations.

Specifically, this paper will ask whether there are language or culture dependencies in: (a) the overall organization and outcome of the interactions, (b) the range of strategies for expressing disagreement and suggestion, (c) the amount of directness/indirectness expressed in the

control acts. It will also trace other potential sources of variation such as gender.

Method

Subjects

Five groups of six graduate students, three males and three females in each, served as voluntary participants. One group consisted of native American English speakers; the other four were native Mandarin speakers: two groups of Taiwanese Chinese and two groups of mainland Chinese. As far as possible, degree of solidarity among members of each group was controlled so that members were, in general, friends, but not intimates. All participants were graduate students at ASU with comparable TOEFL scores, although oral proficiency was not measured.

Materials and Procedure

Each group was presented with a uniform written convergence task (Duff, 1986), a desert survival exercise (See Appendix A) in which participants followed a two-step process. First, they were asked to rank individually a group of items according to necessity for survival in the desert. They were subsequently instructed to agree on a mutual ranking of the same items within thirty minutes. Each group was told that voting or flipping coins was disallowed; rather, they were to reach consensus through discussion. Two of the four Chinese groups (one from Taiwan and one from mainland China) received instructions and conducted the interaction in Mandarin, while the other two completed the

exercise in English, their L2. All groups had given prior consent to audio and video-recording.

Coding

We identified disagreements and suggestions in the transcripts of the interactions by mutual agreement. By encompassing the total number of these speech act-types across the complete interaction, we hoped to gain a better understanding of the dynamics of the exchange as a whole. We also observed overall qualitative comparisons of the conduct and outcome of the interaction in terms of efficiency and organization.

We classified each act according to features of its realization and attempted to gauge the degree of directness of each strategy type by reference to meaning and function, taking into consideration the connection of the act to previous discourse.

Results and Discussion

Some qualitative comparisons

We found similarities and differences in the ways in which the five groups began the interaction, how they reached consensus (illustrated here by consensus on the first item only) and in what the ranking outcomes were relative to the ranking of a survival expert, i,e., the success of the group interaction.

In all four of the non-American groups, a leader emerged in the first turn:

TCE (Taiwanese Chinese in L2 English): So how about we just see the rank, how about the first one?

MCE (Mainland Chinese in L2 English): So let's compare what we have;

TCC (TC in Chinese): Hao le. Kai shi. Hao, women xian cong XXXX kai shi. (Ok, let's begin. Let's start with [name of person in group]).

MCC (Mainland Chinese in L1): Di yi ge ken ding shr zhi nan zhen le. (The first must be the compass).

The Americans, in contrast, made humorous small talk back and forth for 15 turns until someone jokingly asked, "Are you the expert here?", which indirectly elicited the first opinion on ranking.

We believe that the immediate taking charge in the Chinese groups versus the relative indirection in the American group is worthy of further investigation. However, we need more evidence to determine to what extent these behaviors reflect other social organization.

In trying to reach consensus on the first item, the two mainland Chinese groups revealed similar patterns which were different from the two Taiwanese groups; Americans patterned yet differently. There appeared to be the greatest complexity of organization in the two mainland groups.

Specificially, the Americans reached consensus on the first item the most efficiently--after about 25 turns, including two suggestions and no disagreement.

The Taiwanese groups were next most efficient. The group in native Chinese reached consensus on the first item after about 180 turns, including only two suggestions and one disagreement. In English, they reached consensus after about 60 turns, with four suggestions, but fully 19 disagreements.

In contrast, the mainland groups displayed much more complexity. The group speaking Chinese reached consensus on the first item only after about 175 turns, including 13 suggestions and 22 disagreements. In fact, their frustration at lack of consensus was apparent in one member's suggesting twice that the group vote, despite the fact that voting was prohibited by the instructions. Similarly, the English-speaking group only reached consensus after 200 turns, following 13 suggestions and as many as 36 disagreements. Furthermore, furing this segment of the discussion someone suggested (unsuccessfully) that they choose a leader.

Comparisons of outcome scores for the task activity (where the lower the score the better) parallel the levels of efficiency just mentioned. The same two groups--Americans, and Taiwanese in their L1--show considerably better scores relative to the others (about 30 points lower): (AE-50; TCC-50; TCE-80; MCE-78; MCC-76). It is not surprising that L2 interactions would yield poorer scores than L1, but the poor score for the mainland group in their native Mandarin unexpectedly parallels the notable complexity of their interaction in reaching consensus on the first item.

We need much more data in order to determine whether the source of this variation is influenced by cultural factors. We do speculate, however, that norms for interactions among the mainland groups may depart considerably from the traditional Confucian concepts of harmony typical of Taiwan, given the tremendous flux recently in language norms there (Scotton & Zhu, 1983; Yuan et al, 1990).

Disagreements

The main findings regarding disagreements further substantiate the claim that cultural differences have reflexes in linguistic choice, although gender also interacts. They can be summarized as follows: (a) the mainland groups use more negative markers (an indication of directness); (b) the Taiwanese disagree by questioning and making indirect statements (strategies which are relatively more indirect); and (c) American males, in particular, use more mitigation than any other sub-group.

Determining what counted as a disagreement led to the striking realization that even in a small, prescribed interaction this speech act can be structurally encoded in a tremendous variety of ways at many varying levels of directness. We characterized the disagreements in two ways, one based on content (and partially on syntactic form) and one based on mitigation features.

The first classification, based on content, constitutes seven categories, as shown in A. In general, we contend that the first three categories, statement of direct opposition,

isolated negative marker, and criticism are more direct than the other four, alternative proposal, indirect opposition, questioning and related reasoning, as we intend to illustrate in the examples in A.:

A. Classification of disagreements and examples:

1. Statement of direct opposition (AE-Yes, we DO need the compass; AE-There is TOO liquid in cactus; TCE-You WON'T; TCE-You WILL; MCE-Yes, we DO; TCC-*Dang ran ke yi* (Certainly can); MCC-*Di tu bu xu yao le* (We don't need the map))

2. Isolated negative marker (No way, No, *Bu shi*)

3. Criticism (AE-I think you're making your own rules, personally; TCE-So it means that uh we we just eat all of the salt before we decide which way we need to go?; MCC-*Sha mo li? Kai wan xiao!* (In the desert? You must be joking!))

4. Alternative proposal (AE-Well, see, you would want to walk at night and not during the day; TCE-No, I think that a parachute [should be next]; MCE-I think a knife is much better than a gun; MCC-*Mei you a. Di yi jiu shi yao zeng mo yang huo jiu* (No, the first thing is how to get rescued.))

5. Indirect opposition (AE-An airmap is only gonna be limited in value; TCE-But both, right, both and we will see which one is more important; MCC-*Na, na hui, you hui you bie de ban fa a* (But there will be other ways.))

6. Questioning (AE-How can you see the compass at night if we don't have a flashlight?; TCE-Why? MCE-Yours is a pair of glasses; what what's the use? TCC-*Ke shi na ni jing zi bu*

ying gai pai zai di si zhi quian ma (But don't you think the mirror should be put before number four?)

7. Related reasoning (AE-But we don't know where we are; TCE-No, if you put it on it will save you; MCC-*Bu shi, yin wei cong sha mo qi hou lai jiang zhi jie da bu fen shi jian dou shi qing tian* (No, because the weather in the desert is mostly clear.))

Quantitative results of this first categorization, shown in Table 1, indicate that the total number of disagreements was very consistent for four of the five groups, but extremely low, relatively, (35) for the TCC group. (Key comparisons are italicized).

Table 1. Occurrences of disagreement-types by group: (**AE**=Americans in English; **TCE**=Taiwanese Chinese in English; **MCE**=Mainland Chinese in English; **TCC**=Taiwanese Chinese in Chinese; **MCC**=Mainland Chinese in Chinese)

	AE		TCE		MCE		TCC		MCC	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Statement of direct opposition	21	**16**	15	**14**	20	**16**	4	**11**	9	**8**
Isolated negative marker	3	**2**	3	**3**	*40*	***32***	*0*	***0***	8	**7**
Criticism	15	**12**	9	**8**	*0*	***0***	3	**9**	*19*	***16***
Alternative proposal	10	**8**	3	**3**	9	**7**	*0*	***0***	8	**7**
Indirect opposition	32	**25**	21	**19**	22	**17**	*12*	***34***	23	**20**
Question	14	**11**	*28*	***26***	14	**11**	3	**9**	19	**16**
Related reasoning	34	**26**	30	**28**	22	**17**	13	**37**	28	**24**
Totals	129		109		127		35		116	

*Note: Numbers are rounded.

Because this is a pilot analysis, we have not applied statistical procedures, but we do note some tendencies worthy of further testing. Looking at the categories in sequence, we see that the Chinese groups used a greater percentage of statements of direct opposition in their L2 than in their native Mandarin (14 and 16 versus 11 and 8, respectively). Furthermore, the English-speaking groups report very similar percentages (16, 14, and 16 percent).

Isolated negative markers, such as a direct "no" or "no way" were prevalent only for the Mainland Chinese group

speaking English (32 percent), and absent altogether in the Taiwanese group speaking Chinese. As with statements of direct opposition, members of both Chinese cultural groups use this direct type more frequently in their L2 performance than in Mandarin. We suspect that these outcomes may be partially related to L2 oral proficiency level.

Yet, overall, these isolated negative markers occur more often for both mainland groups (32 and 7 percent) than for any other group; in addition, when this type is combined with the disagreements which begin with "no", (which can co-occur with a majority of disagreement-types), the pattern is even more pronounced.

Also, the percentage of disagreements which begin with "no" is much higher in both mainland groups than in the other groups: MCE-30% and MCC-28%, but AE-12%; TCE-16%; and TCC-0. This outcome again raises the possibility of transferred influence of the L1 and potential differences in social structure and linguistic norms which may be more indeterminate in mainland China compared to the more stable, traditional norms of Taiwan.

The pattern for criticism and alternative proposals is less clear. Furthermore, with such low numbers of disagreements for the TCC group as a whole, it is difficult to generalize for those less frequently used types.

Indirect opposition and related reasoning are most prevalent for the TCC groups (34 and 37%) and questions as a

category are most prevalent for the TCE group (26%), but we put forth no explanation for this outcome at this time.

We can conclude overall, however, that the relatively direct encodings of disagreements were more characteristic of mainland groups, especially for the English-speaking mainland group, and less direct encodings were more characteristic of the Taiwanese groups. The source of the variation seems to be primarily due to L1/socio-cultural influence, although L2 proficiency level may have some effect as well.

Gender

In an effort to determine if there were any gender effects across groups, we arrived at the findings in Table 2a, which suggest that gender plays only a minor role. As shown in the rightmost column, differences by gender across groups exist only for isolated negative markers (37 to 17), criticism (29 to 17) and related reasoning (89 to 38), with males, across all cultures, issuing more in each of those categories.

Furthermore, as shown in the total percentages in Table 2b, in all but the TCE group (where males dominate 76 to 24 percent over females in disagreements issued), disagreements occurred with equivalent frequency by both genders, although there is a tendency for males to disagree more across all groups. We attribute the gender-related variation of the TCE group to individual personality differences.

Table 2a. Occurrences of disagreement types by gender and group.

(**AE**=Americans in English; **TCE**=Taiwanese Chinese in English; **MCE**=Mainland Chinese in English; **TCC**=Taiwanese Chinese in Chinese; **MCC**=Mainland Chinese in Chinese)

	AE	TCE	MCE	TCC	MCC	Total
Statement of direct opposition						
male	6	13	10	3	4	36
female	15	2	10	1	5	33
Isolated negative marker						
male	3	2	27	0	5	**37**
female	0	1	13	0	3	**17**
Criticism						
male	5	7	0	2	15	**29**
female	10	2	0	1	4	**17**
Alternative proposal						
male	8	2	4	0	3	17
female	2	1	5	0	5	13
Indirect opposition						
male	11	13	14	5	10	53
female	21	8	8	7	13	57
Question						
male	8	18	2	1	9	38
female	6	10	12	2	10	40
Related reasoning						
male	24	26	12	7	20	**89**
female	10	4	10	6	8	**38**

Table 2b. Occurrences of disagreements by gender and group. (**AE**=Americans in English; **TCE**=Taiwanese Chinese in English; **MCE**=Mainland Chinese in English; **TCC**=Taiwanese Chinese in Chinese; **MCC**=Mainland Chinese in Chinese)

	AE		TCE		MCE		TCC		MCC	
Disagreements	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
male	65	**50**	81	**76**	69	**54**	18	**51**	66	**58**
female	64	**50**	28	**24**	58	**46**	17	**49**	48	**42**
Total	**129**		**109**		**127**		**35**		**116**	

The second classification of disagreements that we attempted deals with mitigating markers. It derives from Pomerantz (1984), who argues that weak disagreements begin with a partial agreement (e.g., *Yes*, but I thought we'd do it this way), where the italicized partial agreement has a mitigating effect.

Adapting Pomerantz' classification to coding three degrees of directness, we categorized disagreements which contained partial agreement (and optionally, other mitigation such as hedges (maybe, actually)) as <u>weak</u> or least direct, those which had no partial agreement, but some other mitigation, as <u>moderate</u> or moderately direct, and those which contained neither as <u>strong</u> or direct.

As expected for a group of friendly acquaintances, we found that the strong type was in a majority, as Table 3

shows. Most disagreements were unmitigated and had no markers of partial agreement. However, the percentages of strong disagreements are particularly high for the two L2 groups, TCE and MCE (83 and 92 percent, respectively), and relatively lower for all groups using their native language. Directness thus seems to be an influence of speaking in one's less familiar L2 rather than of transfer from L1, relating again, it seems, to oral proficiency, which, unfortunately, we have not measured.

Table 3. Disagreement-types derived from Pomerantz.

	AE		TCE		MCE		TCC		MCC	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Strong	86	**67**	91	**83**	117	**92**	24	**69**	85	**73**
Moderate	23	**18**	7	**6**	7	**6**	10	**28**	27	**23**
Weak	20	**15**	11	**10**	3	**2**	1	**3**	4	**3**

*Note: Numbers are rounded.

However, the AE group used much more mitigation than any other group. That is, fully 25 percent of the disagreements in the AE group were mitigated, but only 12 percent in both L2 groups, only 11 percent in the Taiwanese group speaking Chinese and as low as 5 percent in the mainland group speaking Chinese. Furthermore, American males mitigated fully 35 percent of their disagreements, but American females only mitigated 14 percent of theirs. No other gender-related differences were apparent.

In addition, when specific markers of mitigation in English are examined for the three English-speaking groups,

there are fully twelve different types for the American group (e.g. I mean, I think, well, personally, probably, actually), but only four for the Taiwanese group (perhaps, actually, maybe, I think) and two for the mainland group (I think, possible). The expression "I think" comprises a majority of markers used in both L2 groups, and may not even be as clearly a marker of mitigation as the other expressions. Thus, mitigation is virtually absent in all but the American group, and especially prevalent for American males, contradictions to studies that claim directness for Americans relative to Asians and directness for males relative to females.

Suggestions

Unlike the number of disagreements, which were consistent for four groups, but low for one, the number of suggestions was particularly high for the Americans (90), low for the Taiwanese in English (40) and equivalent for the other three groupings, as Table 4. shows. Table 4 also presents the two topical categories we found for suggestions: procedural and ranking. Procedural suggestions offered opinions on how to conduct the interaction on a macro-level, e.g., "Start at the top of the list"; "I think we should keep going". Ranking suggestions were closely linked to the ranking of the list of items, e.g., "The compass should be two and that should be three."

Table 4. Suggestions by topic and group:

	AE		TCE		MCE		TCC		MCC	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Procedural	28	**30**	3	7.5	13	19.7	6	9	3	4.8
Ranking	62	70	37	92.5	53	80.3	61	91	60	95.2
Total	90		40		66		67		63	

Fully 30 percent of the Americans' suggestions were of the procedural type, quite unlike the other groups'. This difference partially reflected the persistent effort of especially one group member to have his suggestion ratified. The following comments occur over 10 pages of text as one speaker gradually obtains ratification of his suggestion:

(a) "Well, I contend that we should stay put."

(b) "Well, first of all, is the consensus that we're travelling? Because my idea is that we should stay put."

(c) "That's one of the main ideas of survival in the desert is to stay put so that somebody can come and find you."

(d) "Actually, I believe the intelligent thing is to stay put."

(e) "I think we should stay put."

(f) "Well, why do we need the map and the compass if we're staying put?"

(g) "Let's drop the compass and the map. We're staying put."

(h) "Let's drop the compass and the map for now. We're staying put."

(i) "So let's stay put, the only way we can ( ) the map and compass, so let's start over."

(j) "Survivalists will tell you, you stay put."

(k) "Let's erase the map and the compass."

(l) "Start it over."

(m) "We're staying put." (repeated by four speakers).

There was no comparable embedding of a repeated procedural suggestion in any other group, although a member of the TCE group re-issued a ranking suggestion, (to have the mirror placed high in the list), and was never ratified by the males (interestingly, her ranking was in line with the target expert ranking, too).

We also categorized suggestions by general syntactic type and overlapping degree of directness. Following Ervin-Tripp (1980), we claim that imperative forms are most direct, ("Put the compass at four"), declaratives less direct ("The eighth is the sunglasses, I think"), and interrogatives least direct ("Isn't it important to have the first aid kit?"). We added a fourth category of ellipsis (just using a simple noun phrase, e.g., "Vodka") for which we make no claims about directness at this point.

Examples in Chinese include:

(a) imperative: *xian ba shui he dao du zi li, zai pao bu jiu, hao le ma.* (First, drink the water, then run).

(b) declarative: *wo shi zhi nan zheng.* (Mine's compass).

(c) interrogative: *yao bu yao jiang luo san ai*? (Do we need the parachute or not?)

As Table 5 shows, there is little variation across all five groups. However, the greatest differences parallel earlier findings, in that a mainland group uses the most imperatives (most direct) and a Taiwanese group uses the most interrogative forms (least direct).

Table 5. Suggestions by syntactic type/directness and group

	AE		TCE		MCE		TCC		MCC	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Imperative	7	7.7	1	2.5	7	10.6	10	14.9	15	23.8
Declarative	57	63.3	18	45.0	42	63.6	36	53.7	39	61.9
Interrogative	15	16.6	14	**35.0**	5	7.6	11	16.4	5	7.9
Ellipsis	11	12.2	7	17.5	12	18.2	10	14.9	4	6.3
Total	90		40		66		67		63	

Gender

Gender comparisons, in Table 6, show that as with disagreements, both genders issue suggestions in equal numbers. The reversal in usage by gender between the two mainland groups (in bold) remains unexplained.

Table 6. Frequency of suggestions by gender and group

	AE		TCE		MCE		TCC		MCC	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Female	42	46.7	23	57.5	24	**36.3**	40	59.7	40	**63.5**
Male	48	53.3	17	42.5	42	**63.6**	27	40.3	23	**36.5**
Total	90		40		66		67		63	

Interestingly, when it comes to mitigation, we found that males mitigated twice as frequently in the three native language interactions as in the L2 groups. However, as with disagreements, for the L2 interactions, the only (and ambiguous) marker of mitigation is 'I think', while for the Americans there are eight other types (e.g., maybe, actually, etc.).

One last difference between the mainland and Taiwanese groups speaking Chinese was noticeable. The sentence-final particles which "reduce forcefulness" or "solicit agreement" (Li & Thompson, 1981) such as ma, ba, la, na..la, a, etc. were much more frequent in the mainland group and more frequent for females than for males, variation that needs to be further explored.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the interactions we have looked at reflect some cultural dependencies in organization and in patterns of realization of the FTA's of disagreement and suggestion. There is a range of strategies for expressing disagreement and suggestion in the conduct of group tasks, but that same range adequately describes all of the language events studied here.

In sum, the control acts of the Chinese speaking English are often more direct than the Americans'. The mainland Chinese are often more direct than the Taiwanese Chinese, suggesting the possibility of transfer to L2 use, but the

potential influence of oral language proficiency and gender also need further consideration.

On the basis of our findings, we argue that ESL students could benefit from more and better exposure to a variety of forms used to disagree and to suggest, as well as from exposure to how these forms are situated in ongoing discourse and how ratification of one's opinion is achieved (see Williams, 1988).

We invite others to attempt further comparisons, in order to derive good ESL models from real language tasks.

References

Beebe, L. & Takahashi, T. (1989). Sociolinguistic variation in face-threatening speech acts. In M. Eisenstein (Ed.), The dynamic interlanguage: Empirical studies in second language variation (pp. 199-218). New York: Plenum Press.

Blum-Kulka, W. & Olshtain, E. (1984). Requests and apologies: a cross-cultural study of speech act realization patterns. Applied Linguistics, 5, 196-213.

Brown, P. and Levinson, S. (1987). Politeness: Some universals in language usage. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

Duff, P. (1986). Another look at interlanguage talk: Taking task to task. In R. Day (Ed.), Talking to learn: Conversation in second language acquisition (pp. 147-181). Rowley, MA: Newbury House.

Eisenstein, M. & Bodman, J. (1986). 'I very appreciate': expressions of gratitude by native and non-native speakers of American English. Applied Linguistics, 7, 167-185.

Ervin-Tripp, S. (1976). 'Is Sybil there?' The structure of some American English directives. Language in Society, 5, 25-66.

Flowerdew, J. (1990). Problems of speech act theory from an applied perspective. Language Learning, 40, 79-105.

Garcia, C. (1989). Disagreeing and requesting by Americans and Venezuelans. Linguistics and Education, 1, 299-322.

Goffman, E. (1959). The presentation of self in everyday life. Garden City, NY. Doubleday Anchor Books.

Li, C. & Thompson, S. (1981). Mandarin Chinese: A functional reference grammar. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Nash, T. (1983). RELC Journal, 14, 87-98.

Pomerantz, A. (1984). Agreeing and disagreeing with assessments: some features of preferred/dispreferred turn shapes. In J. M. Atkinson & J. Heritage (Ed.), Structures of social studies in conversation analysis (pp. 57-101). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Scotton, C.M. & Zhu, Wanjin. (1983). 'Tongzhi' in China: Language change and its conversational consequences. Language in Society, 12, 477-494.

Williams, M. (1988). Language taught for meetings and language used in meetings: Is there anything in common? Applied Linguistics, 9, 45-58.

Yuan, J., Kuiper, K. & Shaogu, S. (1990). Language and revolution: Formulae of the Cultural Revolution. Language in Society, 19, 61-79.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Some portions of these data were analyzed in an earlier paper (Pearson, forthcoming).

[2]We also conducted a more detailed structural and perceptual analysis, including modal verb classification, which will be discussed in a future paper.

Appendix A*

Desert Survival Task

The Situation:

It is approximately 10:00 a.m. in mid August and you have just crash landed in the Sonoran Desert in southwestern United States. The light twin engine plane, containing the bodies of the pilot and the co-pilot, has completely burned. Only the air frame remains. None of the rest of you have been injured.

The pilot was unable to notify anyone of your position before the crash. However, he had indicated before impact that you were 70 miles south-southwest from a mining camp which is the nearest known habitation, and that you were approximately 65 miles off the course that was filed in your VFR Flight Plan.

The immediate area is quite flat and except for occasional barrel and saguaro cacti appears to be rather barren. The last weather report indicated the temperature would reach 110 degrees that day, which means that the temperature at ground level will be 130 degrees. You are dressed in light weight clothing--short sleeved shirts, pants, socks and street shoes. Everyone has a handkerchief. Collectively, your pockets contain $2.83 in change, $85.00 in bills, a pack of cigarettes, and a ballpoint pen.

Your Task:

Before the plane caught fire your group was able to salvage the 15 items listed on the next page. Your task is to rank these items according to their importance to your survival, starting with "1" as the most important, to "15" as the least important.

You may assume -

1. the number of survivors is the same as the number on your team;
2. you are the actual people in the situation;
3. the team has agreed to stick together;
4. all items are in good condition.

Step 1 -

Each member of the team is to individually rank each item. Do not discuss the situation or problem until each member has finished the individual ranking.

Step 2 -

After everyone has finished the individual ranking, rank order the 15 items as a team. Once discussion begins do not change your individual ranking.

Your team will have until _____o'clock to complete this step.

*(The original source of this task is unknown.)